

Some dos and don'ts about pre-examination anxiety

Editor's note: Mrs. Smissaert has been hired by Student Health Services as a campus resource person. She will be working out of the health centre, and will concentrate on health teaching and information.

By JANE SMISSAERT BN

Some people fear the act of

failing - others fear the examinations itself. Consequently whether a student is well-prepared or failing, he or she may experience "pre-examination anxiety".

It is called anxiety when the fear experienced is disproportionate to the objective danger. What is important to know, is that a certain amount of anxiety is normal for all individuals in your situation.

There are certain things which might help control your anxious feelings.

1. regular, well-balanced diet
2. enough sleep (what is normal for you)
3. recreation
4. organization
5. avoidance of any major change of habits.

Here are a few symptoms which

reflect the effect anxiety has on your general health.

1. Insomnia - but the student falls asleep over his books in the daytime.
2. Feeling of being "tired" all the time.
3. Pessimistic thoughts about the exam.
4. Irritability, jumpiness, tearfulness may all be enhanced.

5. You may have a feeling of impaired concentration (this should be helped by a break in studies for relaxation).

Many of you will have your own ways of coping with different levels of anxiety. We suggest a few things you should not do in an effort to cope with the symptoms of anxiety.

1. Do not take wake-up pills; these stimulants only heighten the anxiety.
2. Do not ignore troublesome symptoms - if something is bothering you, tell someone about it.
3. Do not take unprescribed medication.
4. Do not increase alcohol intake in an attempt to relax - continue doing what is normal for you.

Our concern is for all of you - we've been through it - we know it is not the most pleasurable experience of university life. So if any of you experience feelings or symptoms of anxiety that you do not understand, or symptoms that are in any way interrupting what you must do, please come and tell us about it.

We have a special concern for the student whose anxiety level rises to point where he begins to feel "physically exhausted", or "panicky", or "depressed". We know that these feelings are apt to impair function at a crucial time. We know that repeated interviews with people who understand can help. We also know that sometimes medication is required to cope with excessive anxiety.

We offer you help at Student Health Services and Student Counselling Services. We also wish you good luck.

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